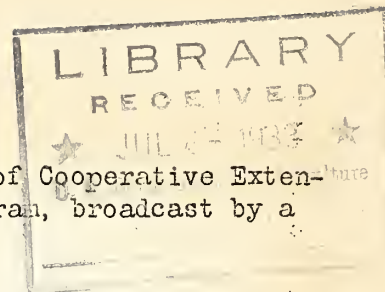


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THE COTTON REDUCTION PROGRAM.



A radio talk by J. A. Evans, associate chief, Office of Cooperative Extension Work, delivered in the National Farm and Home Hour program, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC radio stations, June 28, 1933.

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Well, the cotton campaign is getting underway. Of course, it was expected that there would be some confusion, and some delays, and misunderstandings during the first day or two, while the vast field machine was being tuned up, oiled and otherwise conditioned for its great task, and this has proven to be the case.

The majority of the telegrams which poured in on the Administration during the first two days of the campaign ask for rulings, to clear up doubtful points regarding procedure, organization, or the terms of the contract; or state special problems or situations which have arisen and need clarification by the administrators.

The question of how benefit payments are to be made was one frequently asked; whether the check would be sent to the landlord or to the tenant, or jointly. The answer was, of course, that it would be made in a way wanted, and a way to clearly indicate this on the contract was suggested.

A number of agents wired rush orders for additional blanks, while some said that the blanks mailed them had not yet arrived. Interesting individual situations are being put up by wire for rulings. One man has three farms with an equal number of acres of cotton growing on each one. He wants to remove 1/3 of all his cotton from production, and asks to know if he can take out all this land on one farm and leave the cotton on the other two undisturbed. The answer was, that he could, providing that the local committee was satisfied that the farm on which the cotton he proposed to take out of production was growing was a fair average in point of fertility of all the three farms.

Practically all the telegrams received from directors, field agents and private individuals, indicate a general willingness on the part of farmers to cooperate with the Government. Some state that the actual rate of signing will appear to be slow because of the time necessary to explain the benefit payment plans to farmers and assist in executing the contract. This was expected.

Every type of cotton farmer is, apparently, equally willing to take cotton out of production. For illustration: A Texas banker with 2000 acres of cotton located in the famous cotton producing black land belt of Texas wired that he was willing to take it all out of cultivation, if the Government would pay benefits on it all.

A Delta planter with 20 thousand acres in cotton, growing on as fertile land as there is on the globe, offered to take out any part of it desired. At the other extreme, a small hill farmer in the mountain section of the Piedmont area walked ten miles to the county agent's office to let him know that he was anxious to cooperate in the cotton acreage reduction plan. The only doubt which has, so far, been voiced as to the complete success of the cotton program was in a telegram from a farmer who expressed the fear that the sudden rise in cotton prices might

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cause farmers to waver in their previously reached decision, to sign contracts. I can't believe his fears are at all warranted. I should as soon expect the crew of a storm-tossed, sinking boat to refuse the life lines thrown them from a staunch sea-worthy ship, which had raced to rescue them, because they had just caught a glimpse of light through the still raging storm. There is an old adage which condenses the wisdom of centuries of human experiences into these few words: "It is better to be safe than sorry." I would recommend this adage to the thoughtful consideration of any cotton farmer who may for the moment be tempted to gamble, on the chance of profiting in the end, by refusing cooperation in the proposed plan to reduce the American supply of cotton.

To my mind, the cooperating farmer, if this cotton plan is made effective, has certainly played safe. He gets a fair return based even on the present market prices for an average crop of cotton on the land which he takes out of cultivation. He gets paid for the crop this summer instead of having to wait until late next fall to market it and get his money. He has to incur no further expenses on or run any risks incident to the crop. His yield and his price are fixed -- certain. The land taken out of cultivation is available to grow needed food and feed crops or legumes for soil building. And if he has chosen the cash and option plan of benefit payment, he still has an option on as much cotton as he would usually have harvested on the land taken out of cultivation, and at a price of only 6 cents a pound, and he can carry the option without cost or risk and exercise it by selling the cotton next winter or spring, if it will pay him to do so, but is not required to exercise the option at all unless he can make a profit by doing so. And in addition to all this, he has the supreme satisfaction of knowing that he is playing his expected part, in a great cooperative plan backed by all the power and resources of his Government, intended to increase the buying power and prosperity of cotton farmers by lifting cotton prices to, and maintaining them at, a fair and parity level with the prices of things he has to buy. Yes, the cooperating farmer is safe.

On the other hand, the non-cooperator may have occasion to be sorry. In the first place, no matter how promising it looks now, he cannot know what his yield of cotton will be next fall. Every experienced cotton farmer knows that July and August are the critical months for this crop and that innumerable things can happen to it during that period. It is a common saying among farmers that no other crop can promise as much early in the season and give as little at harvest, or promise as little in July and turn out well in November, as cotton. Boll weevils, boll worms, leaf worms, flea hoppers, or other insect pests may work havoc to the crop before harvest time. Wilt or anthracnose damage may prove severe. Excessive rains or severe drouth may occur, violent storms or floods are hazards to which his crop must still be liable and any one of which may cause now promised crops to yield little at harvest time. In the meanwhile he must continue to cultivate; may be forced to incur the expense of fighting boll weevil or other insect pests; must pick and gin his crop and haul it to market; and can never be sure until his cotton is actually sold what price he is going to get for it.

Is the possible chance of a little extra profit sufficient pay for a guilty conscience, always reminding him that he has betrayed his fellow farmers in a great crisis, by his refusal to cooperate with them and with his Government. That he has been willing to sell his own and his fellow farmer's birthright, "economic equality," for uncertain promise, of a mess of pottage, and cannot for months to come be sure that he will even receive his pay.

When you weigh all factors, Mr. Cotton Farmer, I am sure you will agree that in this emergency, "it is better to be safe than sorry."